

Frequently Asked Questions
In-season Closure of Recreational Hogfish Harvest in the South Atlantic
August 2015

What does the in-season closure of recreational hogfish harvest do?

- The in-season closure of hogfish prohibits the recreational harvest or possession of hogfish in South Atlantic federal waters beginning at 12:01 a.m. (local time) on August 24, 2015.
- Federal waters will reopen to recreational harvest at 12:01 a.m. (local time) on January 1, 2016.

Why is this closure necessary?

- The reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act required that NOAA Fisheries and fishery management councils establish catch limits to prevent overfishing (rate of removal from the population is too high), and accountability measures such as in-season closures to help prevent overages of catch limits.
- The recreational catch limit for hogfish is 85,355 pounds whole weight.
- Reports indicate that landings have exceeded the 2015 catch limit for hogfish by 142,364 pounds (267%).
- Recreational landings can be found on the Southeast Regional Office's Web site at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>.
- This is the first time this fishery will close since NOAA and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council implemented annual catch limits for managed species.

Can I harvest hogfish in state waters?

- This closure only prohibits harvest from Federal waters in the South Atlantic.
- However, some states have adopted compatible regulations.
- For information on closure of hogfish in state waters contact:
 - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 850-487-0554.
 - Georgia Department of Natural Resource 912-264-7218.
 - South Carolina Department of Natural Resources 843-953-9300.
 - North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 252-721-7026

Where are the Federal waters of the South Atlantic?

- Federal waters begin three nautical miles offshore in the South Atlantic and include the Florida Keys to the North Carolina/Virginia border.
- A map of this area can be found at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/maps_gis_data/fisheries/s_atlantic/images/sa_eez_off_states.pdf.
- The definition of the South Atlantic Federal waters are listed in the Code of Federal Regulations: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/maps_gis_data/fisheries/s_atlantic/documents/sa_eez_off_states.txt.

Can I harvest hogfish in state waters and then fish in Federal waters for other species?

- The closure prohibits harvest and possession of hogfish in Federal waters.
- If you are stopped in Federal waters and have hogfish in your possession during this closure, you will be in violation.

Can I harvest hogfish in The Bahamas and bring them into the U.S.?

- The closure prohibits harvest and possession of hogfish in Federal waters of the U. S.
- If you are stopped in U.S. Federal waters and have hogfish in your possession during this closure, you will be in violation.

Is the South Atlantic Council going to change hogfish management?

- Amendment 37 to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan is under development by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and includes management measures for hogfish.
- Amendment 37 responds to the August 2014 benchmark stock assessment of hogfish that defined three separate stocks in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.
- Two of the stocks (Georgia-North Carolina and East Florida-Florida Keys) occur in the South Atlantic and one of these stocks (Florida-Florida Keys) is subject to overfishing and is overfished (too few fish in the population).
- Amendment 37 and the associated environmental impact statement will consider management measures (including possible trip limits and size limits) for the two new stocks in the South Atlantic, and a rebuilding plan for the stock Florida-Florida Keys, which is overfished.
- The comment period of the Notice of Intent for Amendment 37 is open until August 31, 2015. The link to the Notice of Intent can be found at:
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2015/am37/documents/pdfs/sa_sg_am37_noi.pdf.

How can I get more information about the in-season closure?

- If you have further questions, feel free to contact NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office by phone at (727) 824-5305.